

March 2, 2020

Testimony on HB 1460/HB 1491
Congressional Districts – Standards (Anti-Gerrymandering of Maryland’s Congressional Districts
House Rules and Executive Nominations

Position: Favorable

Common Cause Maryland supports HB 1460/HB 1491, which would require redistricting standards for Maryland’s congressional districts. This legislation would reform our broken redistricting process.

Maryland draws new congressional and legislative districts every ten years, to update the maps for population changes. District maps are supposed to reflect the ideal of “one person, one vote.” But Maryland ranks worst in the nation when it comes to the compactness of its new Congressional districts. Four of our eight districts are among the most gerrymandered in the country. The current lines divide communities, especially minority communities, reducing those communities’ influence with their elected officials and causing voters to feel manipulated by the process.

Redistricting is more than just a partisan concern. When legislative and congressional districts cut through our counties, neighborhoods, and communities, the voice of those communities is fractured too. And the accountability between our elected officials and their constituents is equally fragmented. Voters feel the elections are rigged – that elected officials are choosing their voters, not the other way around.

We understand the desire to wait to act in Maryland until more states across the country have modernized their redistricting processes. We firmly believe Marylanders deserve fair representation now, and that Maryland should not wait for other states before acting. But we appreciate the sponsor’s interest in using legislation here to encourage other states to also reform their broken systems.

Redistricting maps need to give fair representation to all, to protect communities, and to create districts that a legislator can understand and speak for. HB 1460/HB 1491 is one solution to end our rigged redistricting process for our Congressional and legislative maps and we urge a favorable report.